

SOUPHUB – Constructing a Resume:

Everybody needs a current resume close at hand. You never know when a great opportunity might arise, and it's good to be ready.

Presentation and Format

Hardly any resumes are printed and sent in the post these days, so – unless a posted application is specifically required – don't bother shopping for 100% cotton fibre watermarked parchment.

Pay attention to submission requirements. Most organisations are happy with simple documents created in Word and saved as a .doc, .docx or .rtf file. To retain your formatting and fonts, you could save your resume as a PDF; but first make sure PDFs are accepted. Otherwise, use a standard font and keep images out.

Increasingly, larger organisations are using electronic application tracking systems. Resumes are also commonly distributed internally, emailed and photocopied. This means that a simple, plain resume layout is preferred.

Personal details

Don't waste time with a cover sheet. List your name and contact details at the top of the first page, including your address (suburb and state is fine) and a telephone contact number. Include your email address only if it is private and you can check for incoming messages at least once a day. As a general rule, don't include your work number unless you have a private office where you can take a phone call without being overheard.

Using a mobile number is a good idea, but make sure that you're able to take incoming calls. If you might miss the call, make sure your voicemail message is appropriately professional.

It is no longer usual to include details under headings such as gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity or health. Some experts strongly counsel against including these details. It can make your resume look dated and this personal information is not relevant to your ability to do the job. If any of the factors are relevant and an employer has an exemption to discriminate on these grounds, mention the appropriate information in your cover letter.

Career objective

Differences of opinion exist about including a career objective. Some experts dislike them, viewing them as an Americanism, clichéd or adding no value. If you do use one, expect to rewrite it, even slightly, to match each job you apply for.

Three sample career objectives:

- Accountant
An accounting position in a blue-chip media/entertainment company. Long-term plans are to advance into a management position with responsibility for financial functioning of the firm.
- Graphic designer
To obtain an entry-level position as a graphic designer that will utilise my creative and organisational skills and will provide an intense learning experience.
- Retail manager
To become a store manager in a national retail chain with opportunities to advance to state sales management.

Professional experience

The best resumes are brief and informative, so every word in this section must work hard for you. As a general rule, include more details about your current job, and less details the older the job. If you've been in the workforce for some period of time, simply list the position, company and dates of your earlier or least relevant jobs. You are not obliged to list every job you've ever had, but you should highlight relevant experience whenever it occurred.

A tactic for older job seekers is to only list jobs since, say, 2000.

If possible, illustrate career development in your resume. If you have "downsized" your career or moved sideways, you may wish to include a brief reference to the circumstances that motivated your move. For instance, "By accepting a less senior position, I was able to accommodate part-time graduate study. In this role, I..."

"The best resumes are brief and informative"

Company and title

Make a decision about whether the companies you have worked for are more important than the job titles. The most important information should go first, followed by the job title on a new line. Stay consistent, though, to allow for quick scanning and comprehension.

Job summary

Don't just describe your duties and responsibilities. Emphasise your achievements and show how you contributed to your employer's business. Carefully consider how you can quantify your goals and achievements.

As an example:

"Transformed an inefficient call centre with low morale into an organised, lean and quality focused organisation, increasing revenue by 12 per cent, decreasing costs by 20 per cent and decreasing staff turnover by 25 per cent."

In some cases there won't be a quantitative measure of your achievements. Find other ways to show your contribution. For example:

"Conducted a production inventory and calculated costs as a consultant to a national retailer; findings led to a shift in the purchasing strategy"

There may not have been a problem in the first place. You did however initiate an action and get a result.

"As a self-employed contractor, set up databases for organisations that led to increased productivity for account managers."

Education

The level of detail depends on the balance between your qualifications and your work experience. It may be suitable for school leavers and graduates with little experience to list selected classes and to include results if these are better than average (or requested). Don't just list everything you did at high school.

As a general guide, the less recent your qualification, the less information you provide. A typical format lists the name of the qualification, the date you graduated, the institution which granted it and your major. For example:

BA, 2006, Victoria University of Wellington

Major: History

Add the name of any scholarships or awards you have won to the second line.

If you are partway through a qualification, list it like this:

Graduate Diploma in Public Relations (RMIT) study commenced 2009

Begin with the highest level of educational achievement. You can leave out details about high school if you have a higher degree or qualification.

The education section usually follows the employment details unless you are recently graduated or you are pursuing an academic position where your educational achievements are more relevant.

"A new employer generally won't contact referees until they have selected a preferred candidate — or if they are trying to decide between two candidates."

References and referees

It is increasingly uncommon for past employers to provide written references. Instead, a new employer will want the names and contact details of referees — people who know you well and can be contacted to check the details in your resume.

Choose your referees carefully. You must gain someone's agreement before listing them as a referee. A new employer generally won't contact referees until they have selected a preferred candidate — or if they are trying to decide between two candidates.

Consider not including details of your referees on your resume. Instead, under a heading "Referees", note that referees are available on request. Once you have been interviewed you can offer details of referees. It is a courtesy to advise referees that they may be contacted. It is also a valuable opportunity to tell them briefly about the position, what it involves and to gently remind them of your relevant skills.

Sometimes a job advertisement or position description will specifically ask for the names of referees to be included with your application. In such cases, of course, include them.

Optional extras

A good resume is as brief as possible. Only include items listed below if they will truly strengthen your application.

- Professional training
- Professional affiliations and memberships
- Licences and accreditations
- Knowledge of foreign languages
- Publications
- Special accomplishments such as awards
- Interests

Tailoring your resume

Ideally, tailor your resume for each application you submit. Every job is unique and requires a different mix of skills and experience. Don't focus your resume on what you want. Instead, understand the needs and problems facing the employer. Research the company and industry to work out what problems and challenges the company faces. If you are responding to an advertised vacancy, read the ad closely to identify what issues or problems the successful candidate needs to solve.

Next, go through your work history, retrieving the skills and experience most relevant to this employer and position. Summarize or leave out those parts of your work history which won't help you get the job. Essentially, you are emphasising some skills and achievements and de-emphasizing others. Don't lie.

As part of this process, give some thought to what tone to use in your application. For example, aggressively selling yourself may suit a high-powered sales role. A graphic artist might want to develop a resume that reflects their creativity.

Once you have written the resume be sure to get somebody you trust to read it. An objective opinion can help improve your resume, but keep in mind that there are many different ideas about the ideal presentation. Weigh advice carefully (including ours).

"... tailor your resume for each application you submit"

Different resume formats

There are two main ways to organise your resume:

- **Chronological structure:** The chronological resume is the most common way of structuring your information. It lists your work experience and achievements in each job, beginning with the most recent.
- **Hybrid model:** The hybrid format highlights your strengths by placing your skills, experience and abilities at the beginning, and a chronologically ordered list of experience toward the end, as in this example.

See examples of each of these styles in the next section, below. Each format is suited to different circumstances, which are listed here:

Your status

The most relevant work experience was not the most recent.

I'm changing industries.

I'm changing companies within the same industry.

I want to move into a related industry. For example: photography into multimedia.

I want to return to a previous role eg, a technical person that entered management but wanted to go back to being technical

I've had several positions in the same organisation and would now like to focus on one functional area.

I'm re-entering the workforce.

I've been in the same job for years and I'm scared the employer will think I'm unambitious or unmotivated.

I tend to jump around a lot between jobs.

I'm a graduate with little experience.

Resume type

The hybrid model is best because it orders according to skills and experience but still has the dates.

The hybrid option is the best because it can highlight the transferable skills that are relevant to the position.

The chronological resume is the best in this situation. It shows a career path clearly and shows that you are career-minded.

A chronological CV shows how your career has developed over the years and that your career change is a logical step.

The hybrid resume is the best because it stresses the job where they would prefer to continue their career rather than which was the most recent job.

The hybrid resume is perfect because the candidate can focus on the functional area that was preferred even if it wasn't the most recent.

The hybrid option is perfect because it draws on and emphasises the skills and experience the person may have picked up while not working or before leaving the workforce.

The hybrid resume is the best in this situation because it focuses on the skills learnt rather than the jobs over a time period.

The hybrid resume will 'package' the transferable skills of this person.

The hybrid option is perfect because it draws on and emphasises the skills and experience the graduate may have picked up while studying doing internships or part-time jobs. It is also a good idea to emphasise training and education over non-related work experience.

Chronological format

ANNA KING

Address: Melbourne VIC 3000

Home phone: (03) 9999 1234

Work phone: (03) 9999 5678

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Marketing Manager (Melbourne) 2007-present time

The Wine and Food Emporium

Duties:

- Manage a staff of 18 people
- Liaise with advertising agencies (above and below the line) and brief in all campaigns
- Responsible for \$15 million dollar advertising budget and \$80 million turnover
- Launched two new brands onto national market gaining 15 per cent and 22 per cent market share respectively within two years, earning the MIA's 2001 Award for Best New Product.
- Generated over \$200,000 of free trade-journal publicity

Marketing Research Manager 2002-2007

Di Pastio Pasta Products (Queensland)

Duties:

- Co-ordinate focus groups with key market segments (2/month)
- Brief Market Research Field Teams (15 teams of 5 people) to conduct in-store demonstrations
- Manage telemarketing team of 40 staff, inbound and outbound
- Write and present benchmark reports for CEO and Board of Directors, with findings being used as the basis for a brand extension that resulted in sales of \$2.5 million in the last financial year.

EDUCATION

University of Queensland, Bachelor of Business (Marketing) 2005

Seacliff TAFE, Associate Diploma in Marketing 2001

COMPUTERS

Platforms: Apple, Windows

Software: MS Windows Vista, MS Office, Adobe PageMaker.

Typing: 65 WPM

TRAINING

Train the Trainer Accreditation

SPECIAL SKILLS

- Co-author of seven articles for "Marketing Management" magazine
- Key note speaker at the International MIA Annual Conference attended by 2,500 industry professionals
- Board Member for "Life Skills For Youth" organisation and head of Mentoring Programme.
- French (fluent in speech and written)

REFERENCES

Available on request.

Hybrid format

ANNA KING

Address: Melbourne VIC 3000

Home phone: (03) 9999 1234

Work phone: (03) 9999 5678

OBJECTIVE: Senior Marketing Manager

SUMMARY

Nine years in sales and marketing with a broad range of experience from ground-floor sales and merchandising to marketing management with an international producer and exporter of fine food and wine.

MANAGEMENT

Managed a marketing team of 18 people, telemarketing teams of 75 people and was responsible for a \$15 million dollar advertising budget. Responsible for the client/agency liaison between mainstream, below-the-line and data management agencies. Responsible for the overall profitability of five brands, four of which are market leaders in both share and volume.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Launched two brands onto the national market with each brand gaining a market share of 15 per cent and 22 per cent respectively within two years.

FINANCIAL

Prepared quarterly and annual budget reports. Presented and reviewed the forecasts to senior management and represented the Australian management team at the International MIA Conference held in Chicago last December.

MARKETING RESEARCH

Co-ordinated focus groups (24 per year) and managed a team of 75 in-store market researchers to conduct field demonstrations. Presented research findings to management teams, which used the information as the basis for their product development plans, resulting in the extension of a brand that brought in sales of \$2.1 million in the 2008-2009 financial year.

SALES

Ground floor experience in sales and merchandising with international fast-moving packaged goods company. Territory Manager for North Western region covering 78 stores, 12 product lines and approximately 28 sales promotional events per year.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Date: 2007-present time
Company: The Wine and Food Emporium
Title: Marketing Manager (Melbourne)
Duties: Responsible for a team of 18 people with an advertising budget of \$15 million spread over 5 product lines. Chief liaison between client and agency and responsible for branding and product awareness. Increased turnover to \$80 million dollars in the last financial year, a 15 per cent increase and was awarded the MIA's 2001 Best New Product. Generated over \$200,000 of free trade-journal publicity in the last year.

Date: 2003-2007
Company: Di Pastio Pasta Products (Sydney)
Title: Marketing Research Manager
Duties: Responsible for the management, co-ordination, recruitment and placement of 75 in-store demonstrators including an in-bound and out-bound telemarketing survey conducted in conjunction with the sampling demonstrations. Presented research findings to CEO level and was instrumental in the development of a new brand extension which resulted in a profit of \$2.1 million for the company.

EDUCATION

University of Queensland, Bachelor of Business (Marketing), 2002
Seacliff TAFE, Associate Diploma in Marketing, 1999

REFEREES

Available on request.

Presentation

Do:

- Use good quality white or off-white paper. (if the resume is printed)
- Use a common and easily read font – stick to one font.
- Make best use of available space.
- Use page numbers (except on the front page).
- Check and recheck spelling and grammar.

Don't:

- Use a tiny font size or lines of italic.
- Use clip art.
- Include a photograph of yourself.
- Waste paper on a cover sheet.
- Use coloured paper (it won't fax or photocopy clearly).
- Trust your computer spell check.

Original article by **Rachel Rose** with **Bernadette Schwerdt**.

Updated by **Martin Jorgensen** March 2005

Updated by SEEK October 2011

Resumes that boost interview skills

Your resume's primary job is to win you an invitation to an interview. But that's not all it can do. SEEK's resume expert, Tom Hannemann, explains how a great resume increases your opportunity to shine in the interview.

Your worst enemy in a job interview is time. Therefore, making the most of the time allocated to the interview is critical to gaining a competitive edge. How do you want to be remembered by the interviewers? As the candidate with whom they spent 75 per cent of the precious, never to be repeated time clarifying your skills, experience and achievements? Or as the candidate with whom they had an in-depth discussion about your ability to contribute to the organisation's future success?

Listing your jobs in chronological order and succinctly summarising your duties is not enough. Consider what an employer really wants to know before they even pick up the phone to talk with you. They want to know what difference you have made to your previous employers. They want to know how your skills, qualifications, abilities and know-how have been applied. And they want to know how your efforts have added value to the organisations for which you have worked.

If your resume satisfies these needs, the interviewer does not need to spend valuable interview time discovering what you did, how you did it, what you achieved and what difference your achievements made. The interview therefore starts at a much higher level. Interviewers can dispense with clarifying the basics because it has all been clearly explained to them. They can probe more deeply and you can engage them in a more advanced conversation about how you do things and why you do them in that way.

The conversation at the interview can start at a higher level

In short, the interviewer gets more from the experience. They remember you as the person with whom they had an interesting in-depth discussion. They perceive you as knowledgeable, insightful and competent as you really are. They understand you at a deeper level: your motivations and drivers, your approach to tasks, how you would fit their culture and how effective you are likely to be.

Some of my clients have asked whether this is dangerous: the more they know you, the more likely they are to decide against you. I suggest looking at it from the point of view of the more they know, the better the decision. If you aren't right for the job or the organisation, or if the job or organisation is not right for you, isn't it better to know before you start? There is nothing worse for a career than finding out three months after starting that there is not really a good fit after all. Unless of course, you find out three weeks after starting!

Revising your resume also ensures you have more time at the interview to fully explore the career opportunity and the organisation being presented to you.

Emphasise outcomes not activities

Often we take for granted what we do in our day to day work. Employers and recruitment consultants do not have the same depth of understanding about what you have done as you. They want things spelled out for them. They don't want to have to read between the lines. Your resume should explain everything they want to know.

When I discuss this issue with my clients, many ask whether including all this additional information will make their resume excessively long. People will read what they find interesting and useful. There are ways of formatting and designing your resume that make best use of the page. There are ways of expressing information to minimise the word count without diminishing the value of the information. Knowing what to exclude is also important. Knowing where to position information is often as important as what to say. Let's look at some ways of expressing achievements:

What difference have you made to your previous employers?

Before

"Developed and implemented a new data searching methodology."

After

"Reduced the time required to search the database by developing and implementing meta data structures."

The achievement in this example is not the development and implementation of the methodology, but the time saved by so doing. Anyone can see the benefit of saving time. But not everyone can see the benefit of the new methodology unless it is articulated.

Another typical way of presenting an achievement is:

"Successful tour of nine cities delivering key marketing messages to business partners."

My question was: "So what?" What did the tour achieve? In what way was it successful?"

These are the questions that an interviewer would be duty bound to ask. The question consumes time and the answer pilfers even more. And having to explain the benefits of each achievement at an interview is frustrating. You want to get on with it, but they won't let you because you have not satisfied their curiosity.

The fact that the person toured nine cities is irrelevant. Saying that they delivered key marketing messages is irrelevant and wasteful. Why would you deliver an unimportant marketing message?

Let's satisfy the interviewer's curiosity by saying something like:

People will read what they find interesting and useful.

"Increased product sales and market penetration by 5 per cent after elevating our business partners' sales and marketing abilities through education programmes and advice and by providing more timely product information."

The achievement here was the increase in sales. The method was to improve the abilities of the company's partners. The process was education, advice and better product information. Does this take up more words? Yes. Does it deliver a more effective message? You judge. Could we have said even more than we have about how they went about doing what they

did? Yes, but there has to be something left for the interview! It's a matter of judging how much information to provide.

The conversation at the interview can then start at a higher level by focusing on the content and process of educating the business partners, how they won the hearts and minds of the business partners and how they overcame any barriers in achieving this result.

If you do this for one achievement you will have one meaningful conversation. If you do it for all of them, the entire interview will have more depth. You will probably be so interesting that they will give you more time than your competitors!

Quantifying achievements

Some people ask me whether it is always necessary to try to quantify achievements. It is always best to try to do so if possible. Numbers make sense to people. They provide a universal way of expressing the magnitude and value of an achievement.

Before

"Negotiated and implemented a Queensland Workplace Agreement with the workforce."

After

"Negotiated and implemented a Workplace Agreement that significantly reduced overtime claims and rectified numerous anomalies in employment terms and conditions, reducing confusion and conflict and saving the company around \$70,000 annually."

At the end of the day, the company must believe that it will get value from the new agreement and it should, if it is a good business, attempt to measure the outcome. In this example, there was a tangible cost saving as well as intangible benefits (reduced conflict and confusion). Although it is difficult to quantify the benefit of less conflict and confusion, I doubt any employer would like to see more of them!

Review your resume and ask yourself these questions.

- Does it showcase not just your skills but your achievements?
- Does it show your achievements in a clear, logical and quantifiable way?
- Does it show the reader exactly what you have to offer?

By **Tom Hannemann** from Advance Yourself Career Services

The Resume Checklist

Our resident resume expert, Tom Hannemann, has prepared the following checklist and tips to help you make sure that your resume gives you the best possible advantage.

The checklist is by no means exhaustive, but if you follow these points, you will have a resume that is worth reading and maximises your career opportunities. Each point is important and it is equally important to make sure that your resume incorporates all of them. Miss out on one or two and you could see your good work on the others possibly wasted.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are your achievements expressed in terms of the benefits and value you have added to your employers?

Many people talk about their achievements from a personal perspective rather than from their employer's. For example, some people include in their achievements that they were promoted to this or selected for that or won a trip or that they developed their expertise in a technique or methodology. While these are definitely achievements (for the individual), what is missing is an indication of the value or benefit to the employer. Future employers want to know what contributions you have made in your career to the organisations for which you have worked. They want to know what you have done for others so they can decide whether you are likely to be able to do something of value for them.

Some people leave out the value or impact of their achievements. For example, I read many resumes where the candidate says something like: "Led a review of the company's sales function and recommended the centralisation of the order processing department." What is missing here is the impact or benefit. What happened as a result of the re-structure? Or, some people say: "Developed and implemented an effective induction program." That's fine. But what was the benefit or value of the induction program? What improved as a result?

Miss out on one or two and you could see your good work on the others possibly wasted.

2. Are your achievements clearly corroborated by evidence and examples?

The claims you make in your resume about your accomplishments and contributions are strengthened and have more credibility if you can provide examples and evidence. For example, if you introduced a method that improved workforce productivity, what indicators demonstrate that productivity increased and what was the benefit of the increase in productivity? If you reduced error rates, by what percentage? If you improved your employer's reputation in the market, what evidence indicates that this occurred and what was the benefit to the firm of this improved reputation?

A resume is like a brochure. You are the product. This means that the benefits of inviting you to an interview must be obvious from the outset.

3. Have you indicated how you achieved what you did?

One of the frustrations an employer or recruitment consultant faces when reading a resume is when the method, approach or strategy adopted to get the result is not clear. This is important because employers will want to know whether your approach or style would suit their culture and way of doing things and whether you adopt strategies that seem sound and logical.

For example, if you increased sales by 10%, how did you do it? There are many ways of increasing sales. The value of the achievement is obvious, but was it achieved by penetrating existing accounts further with the same services and products or by introducing new products to existing clients or through a marketing campaign that attracted new clients? Or was it achieved by increasing the number of sales people? The how can often be as important as the what.

The first half page or so should be like a teaser.

4. Are your key strengths and abilities obvious and demonstrable?

A resume is like a brochure. You are the product. This means that the benefits of inviting you to an interview must be obvious from the outset. An effective approach is to summarise your competencies, skills, areas of expertise - the "offer" - up front. The rest of the document should then corroborate and expand on your offer and provide examples to substantiate what you claim to be your key strengths.

This last point is important. I have seen too many resumes where the person claims to be an excellent contributor to a team, only to find no evidence in the rest of the document to suggest that they had ever worked in a team (see point 5 below). I recommend the key strengths section be limited to those attributes, qualifications, areas of expertise and knowledge that really are your strong suits. This means that a list of 30 (and I have seen this) so called key strengths is unlikely to enhance your credibility.

There should be a logical flow and structure to the resume. You can read 11 books on writing resumes and find 12 opinions on the best way to structure and organise them.

5. Are your strengths linked to your achievements and accountabilities?

For example, if you claim to be an effective leader, then your experience and achievements should verify this. In this case it would mean, at the very least, that you have had significant experience in being responsible for managing the performance of one or more teams during

your recent past. At best, it would mean that you have improved the performance, morale, motivation and turnover rates of the teams you have led.

6. Does it encourage the reader to read the rest of it after they've read the first half page?

There is a corporate myth that your resume will only get 30 seconds attention. This is not true. Some resumes only last 15 seconds before they reach the circular filing cabinet. It takes most people about that long (some claim even less) to form an opinion about you based on your resume. If they like the first half page, what it says about you and how it depicts you, it will stimulate them to make the effort to read the rest. It's a bit like a newspaper or magazine article. If the headline and the first few paragraphs interest us, we are more likely to put effort and time into the rest.

Therefore, ask yourself: "What is of interest to my reader in the first half page?" Most people ask the reader to read their home address, e-mail address, phone numbers, date of birth, marital status, name of their kids and dogs and all sorts of detail before they get to the heart of the matter. Put your contact details in the header or footer of the document. Many people start off with their qualifications and education. Why? This is of little interest to the reader at this point. If they don't like what you have to offer, they won't care where you live or how to contact you or that you have more degrees than a thermometer.

The first half page or so should be like a teaser. It should stimulate interest and arouse curiosity. You can achieve this by providing a brief career overview and setting out your offer up front.

7. Does it explain what you do beyond your job description?

One of the main weaknesses I see in resumes is when people provide the reader with a list of duties or tasks and think that is all the reader wants to know. In many cases, the reader will already be familiar enough with the nature of the work you have done to know what your duties were. For example, if you are a Financial Accountant for a commercial enterprise, the reader, either a Recruitment Consultant specialising in finance roles or a manager in charge of the company's finance or accounting function, will have a reasonably good grasp of what a Financial Accountant does. In fact, if you were to examine position descriptions for the Financial Accountant of 50 different organisations (and I have done this exercise for several professions and job families) you will find an 85% overlap. Just look at the job advertisements for ten or so positions in your own field of expertise and note the similarity between the position requirements.

Therefore, you need to ask what you can tell the reader that they might not know and that will interest them. I am not saying that your responsibilities or duties should not be concisely summarised, but an effective resume will deliver more than this. The reader will want to know what you were accountable for ensuring or achieving, what value your current and previous jobs were designed to add to the business of the organisation, the level, nature and scope of your accountabilities, your decision making authority and the impact the job has or had on the organisation

.

8. Is it well structured and organised?

There should be a logical flow and structure to the resume. You can read 11 books on writing resumes and find 12 opinions on the best way to structure and organise them. At the end of the day, the reader needs to know where you worked, when you worked there, the nature of the business of the organisations for which you worked (unless they are household names), what you were accountable for ensuring or achieving and what contributions you made or value you added. They need to know what you have to offer and how to contact you.

Many people agonise over whether to use a functional or chronological or hybrid format. The resume books will advise you what is most suitable for different situations. The main issue is whether the document has a structure that leads the reader from the general to the specific and whether it allows the reader to gain a quick overview if they want to and whether it provides easy access to the details if they need them.

9. Is it visually appealing?

Some people go to extraordinary lengths by using sophisticated graphic design programs, charts, photographs, clip art and so on. Remember, you are probably going to send your resume by e-mail. Therefore, it should be created in Microsoft Word (saved as one version earlier than the current version, since organisations might not upgrade their version as soon as it comes out), only use fonts that come standard with Word and produce it in black and white, since most organisations will use a black and white laser printer and your efforts in selecting nice pastels will look a bit washed out. Clip art is cute, but cute is not usually what you want to sell.

Word has plenty of capacity to allow you to be a little creative in format and design. However, unless you are a graphics expert, I recommend that you keep things simple. Flamboyant attempts at "design" often fall flat unless you are trained. Some people try to create fancy cover pages. These are largely a wasted effort. They add no value. Remember,

substance over form. Don't use fancy borders and other special "effects". They distract the reader from what is important and can unwittingly create suspicion in the reader's mind.

I recommend using a different font for headings and text. For example, you might use Arial or Tahoma bold for the headings and Times New Roman or Garamond plain for the text. Use tables to create plenty of white space to help the reader scan the document and reduce eye fatigue. I usually recommend making the line of text around two-thirds to three-quarters of the width of the page - short lines are easier to read and improve concentration. Use font sizes that are easy to read. I have seen people use 9 point Arial or even 9 point Arial Narrow in an effort to minimise the amount of pages used. This can only annoy the reader.

A four or five page well laid out document that is easy on the eye and leads the reader smoothly through the information is more effective than something crammed into two pages that makes it impossible to find anything and requires the reader to make a superhuman effort to deal with the information.

10. Is it likely to differentiate you significantly from the rest of the candidates?

This means that if you were to take your name from the top and replace it with someone else's, would it make a difference? A resume should reflect your individuality, your unique achievements, your particular combination of skills, expertise, achievements and contributions. It should set you apart from the other applicants.

11. Is the language simple and straightforward?

The most persuasive writing is typically the easiest to read and understand. If your resume is full of jargon and technical terms or phrases that are only commonly used by a handful of people, the reader will reach their tolerance level much sooner than you want them to. I appreciate that some jargon is necessary. However there are two issues to consider.

Firstly, not every recruitment consultant or senior manager or Human Resources Manager will be as intimately familiar with the terms and jargon as someone who uses it all the time. Therefore, write for a somewhat broader audience than your colleagues or immediate manager. Someone once told me that they would not work for anyone who did not understand the technical side of the job as well as they did. They are still looking!

Secondly, an employer and recruitment consultant will want to know whether you understand the broader business implications of what you do, not just the terminology and technical aspects. By talking to them in more general business terms you create an impression that you understand more than your particular field of specialisation. This

creates an even better impression that you might be a candidate for promotion in the future.

Some people have MBAs and other post graduate business or commerce qualifications. (I have one of these things myself) If you know someone who does, you may find something strange happens to their speech and writing patterns. The word "strategic" appears in every other sentence and twice in others. Perfectly adequate, simple terms and phrases become tortured and vague so that the reader has to read three times before they think they know what is being said. People are impressed by resumes that express achievements and accountabilities in clear, concise, unambiguous, direct, active terms.

12. Does it criticise your employers?

Hands up anyone who has ever worked for an organisation or a boss they didn't like or who made dumb decisions or who treated people badly or who were incompetent and so on. Make absolutely sure there is no criticism, even implied, of your current or former employers in your resume, justified or not.

Find out more about Tom Hannemann's approach to preparing resumes at the [Advance Yourself Career Services](#)